(U) **Write Right**: Management Theory Applied to Reporting

FROM: ███████████
of the Reporting Board (S12R)
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(U) "Peel" -ing back old habits to avoid "slip-ups"...

(U) Instructors of reporting classes frequently report receiving phone calls and e-mails from students complaining that "my office doesn't do it the way you said we're supposed to" and asking for arbitration. In some cases, the matter is a misunderstanding that can be cleared up quickly, or the office in question has special reporting instructions documented and approved in consultation with policy organizations. In others, however, **old habits** , or even urban legends, **have contributed to misunderstanding of official reporting policy.**

(U) This is especially understandable in these times of great change from a need-to-know world to a need-to-share one, but resolving conflicting guidance requires that all concerned parties work together to ascertain current policy and the rationale underlying it, and establish procedures that conform to that policy (and, we hope, keep the instructors apprised of results so that course material may be updated if necessary).

(U) Cases in point are documented in the latest issue of The Reporting Forum #003-05 in the lead article, "Fallacies of SIGINT Reporting." Situations like this bring to mind the following management-class parable:

Start with a cage containing five apes. In the cage, hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long, an ape will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the banana. As soon as he touches the stairs, spray all of the apes with cold water.

After a while, another ape makes an attempt with the same result -- all the apes are sprayed with cold water. Turn off the cold water. If, later, another ape tries to climb the stairs, the other apes will try to prevent it even though no water sprays them.

Now, remove one ape from the cage and replace it with a new one. The new ape sees the banana and wants to climb the stairs. To his horror, all of the other apes attack him. After another attempt and attack, he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five apes and replace it with a new one. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm.

Again, replace a third original ape with a new one. The new one makes it to the stairs and is attacked as well. Two of the four apes that beat him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs, or why they are participating in the beating of the newest ape.

After replacing the fourth and fifth original apes, all the apes that have been sprayed with cold water have been replaced. Nevertheless, no ape ever again approaches the stairs.

Moral: if you find your fellow apes attacking you when you go for that banana, ask them why, and if they explain about the cold water, ask whether anyone's checked with the primate-house manager about the status of the cold-water-spray policy. If they say, "because that's the way we do things here," look outside the cage for answers. You'll be doing all the apes a favor.

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